

My Niagara Falls  
by  
Valerie Stephanson

As a small child growing up in rural Saskatchewan in the 1950's, I used to dream of visiting far away places. I would sit in the school yard on a summer's afternoon and gaze dreamily at the vapour trails left by the jets flying high overhead. It was a dream very early in my life to find out just where those elusive vapour trails would lead. Going to the local public library became a regular habit of mine. All sorts of travel books would find their way into our house. Particular favourites of mine were Jules Verne's "Around the World in 80 Days" and "Travels with my Aunt" by Graham Greene. There was absolutely no doubt that I was hooked on travel. The one book I was totally enchanted by was a book of illustrations depicting Niagara Falls. The entire book from what I recall, had magnificent pictures of this most spectacular of the natural wonders of the world. Even then, I can remember thinking what it would be like to actually visit this awesome creation of nature.

By the time I was 13, my parents decided that a cross-

country car trip to the Maritimes was in order. Of course, to satisfy my passion and curiosity about Niagara Falls, it was decided that yes, we would indeed make a brief stop there. Imagine my joy!! Imagine my disappointment when my always robust healthy sister came down with food poisoning, and the entire family had to make a hasty retreat back to Saskatchewan without even getting a glimpse of the Falls!!

As the years went by, I found that I was still fascinated by the idea of seeing Niagara. When my husband and I moved to Calgary in the early 70's, we discussed the Niagara Falls honeymoon idea. We were newly married and both shared the same excitement about a trip there. Unfortunately, as he was finishing up college, and I was working to support us, our honeymoon idea was put on hold. After our daughter was born in 1981 and we then went on to weather two successive recessions, it was finally time to plan our belated honeymoon in Niagara Falls. The summer of 1989 was chosen, and what a glorious summer it turned out to be. We flew to Toronto, making vapour trails the entire way, I hope. Of course, by now there were three of us to share this belated dream. Over the years, my husband

And I realized that the most precious gift a couple can share is a child. Our child, was now to share in a most wonderful experience.

About ten kms. out of Niagara Falls, our anticipation had grown to a fever pitch. We found our way to a parking area near the Falls, and started the last few hundred meters to our destination. The thunderous crashing of the water was our first introduction to the incredible power of this wonder of nature. All three of us broke into a sprint for the final few meters. Our 8 year old was no competition for her 30ish parents!!

We were not to be disappointed! The rushing tumultuous churning of the water, the magnificence of both the Horseshoe Falls and the American Falls quite literally took our breath away. After all those years of waiting and anticipating, our moment had come and it was very good indeed. One could stand routed to the same spot for hours. We were hypnotized! It was with great reluctance that we finally "disengaged " our eyes and headed off to our next adventure that just happened to end up being the best of all our adventures. Of course, I am referring to the "Maid of the Mist". As we boarded the boat and were handed our rain gear, we finally realized that not only were we going to see and hear



the Falls, we were quite literally going to be a part of them. I shall never forget the sound - the mist- the memories of that golden afternoon. Attempting to take just the right picture, and then abandoning all attempts as the pure delight of just being there made picture taking secondary to our pleasure. When we left the boat, very reluctantly I might add, we were like three giddy children. Our hair was soaking wet, our faces had water trickling down to our chins, and our smiles, <sup>were</sup> seemingly permanently in place. Even walking back to the Falls in the evening and seeing how dramatic and entrancing they looked all lighted up, couldn't come close to our elation of that afternoon on the Maid of the Mist.

Now, as we approach our 20th wedding anniversary, we think back fondly of our enchanting belated honeymoon trip that is just a lovely memory.. The beauty and the magic that is Niagara Falls, however, stays in one's heart forever!

Submitted by:

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